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United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2366 (2017), by which the Council established the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and requested me to report on its activities every 90 days. The report covers the period from 21 July to 26 September 2018.

II. Main developments

2. Since the swearing-in of Iván Duque Márquez as President on 7 August, the new Government has taken detailed stock of the country's situation, organized the new Administration to strengthen inter-agency coordination, made institutional appointments and prepared policies on a range of key national matters. Under the Constitution, the President is to present the Government's four-year national development plan by 15 November, which will cover the full extent of the Administration's agenda and serve as a basis for public investments.

3. In August, the President appointed Miguel Ceballos as High Commissioner for Peace, Emilio José Archila as High Counsellor for Post-Conflict, responsible for the reintegration of former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army (FARC-EP) members, and Nancy Gutiérrez as Minister of the Interior. On 17 September, those three officials were appointed as members of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement. Mr. Archila was appointed as the representative of the Government on the National Reintegration Council, together with the Director of the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization. Mr. Archila was also designated to lead the secretariat of the National Commission on Security Guarantees, among other functions. I welcome the appointments to these three important bodies established under the Peace Agreement and urge the prompt resumption of their activities.

4. During his inauguration, in subsequent weeks and at a joint press conference on 20 September with my Special Representative for Colombia and Head of Mission, Jean Arnault, the President reiterated several commitments that have a bearing on the Mission's mandate. He emphasized his firm support for a more effective reintegration of former FARC-EP members engaged in the peace process. Given the persistent pattern of killings of community leaders in zones of conflict, on 23 August the

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President, together with the Inspector General, announced the adoption of a broad "pact for life and the protection of social leaders and human rights defenders" and instructed the Ministry of the Interior to urgently formulate a policy based on the commitments set forth in the pact. In line with the Mission's own considerations, as mentioned in my previous report (S/2018/723), the President emphasized the need for more focused and tightly coordinated actions by State agencies in bringing development, security and the rule of law to the areas affected by conflict. He underscored his commitment to social dialogue and travelled extensively throughout the country to meet local authorities, the business community and civil society.

5. On 30 August, the President sent a letter addressed to the Security Council and to me with a joint request by the Government and the People's Alternative Revolutionary Force (FARC) to extend the mandate of the Mission. I am grateful for the confidence thus placed in the United Nations by both parties to the Peace Agreement. I am convinced that the Council's support, as reaffirmed in its resolution 2435 (2018), by which it renewed the Mission's mandate for an additional year until 25 September 2019, remains one of the key assets of the peace process.

6. During the reporting period, and especially since the new Government took office, there have been developments relating to the peace process and the implementation of the Peace Agreement, as set out below.

Risks to the reintegration process

7. On 6 September, the Mission issued a press release in which it expressed its concern over the possible implications for the reintegration process of the departures of several former FARC-EP commanders from the territorial areas for training and reintegration in the south-eastern region. Some of them have cited concerns about their physical and legal security as a motivating factor for leaving the areas where some 1,500 former combatants are undergoing reintegration. Regardless of their motivations, this development has underlined the continued fragility of the peace process, owing in particular to the persistence of violence in the zones of conflict linked mainly to criminal groups. Some of those groups include former FARC-EP members commonly referred to as "dissidents" who have abandoned the peace process. Reintegration in Colombia is facing daunting challenges, as described in my previous reports, and which include weak or absent State institutions, the impact of illegal economies and the relentless efforts by armed groups to lure former FARC-EP members into their ranks. The latest developments confirm what I stressed exactly a year ago in my final report on the work of the United Nations Mission in Colombia (S/2017/801), namely that the effective reintegration of former FARC-EP members is central to the overall peace consolidation agenda.

Congressional developments

8. In early September, the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives each elected its Peace Commission, whose mandate is to support the peaceful resolution of conflict, social dialogue and reconciliation. On 10 September, the Senate Peace Commission, with the Mission's support, made a first visit to a territorial area for training and reintegration, in San Vicente del Caguán, Caquetá Department, to ascertain the state of reintegration in that region, to interact with former FARC-EP members, neighbouring communities and representatives of the Armed Forces and to affirm their support for the reintegration effort. The visit reassured former FARC-EP members and enhanced the senators' understanding of the pending challenges. It is hoped that the visit will be followed by others, which will also have the Mission's support. Field visits by members of the Commission from the Chamber of Representatives, most recently to Antioquia Department, have also been valuable.

9. Following the visit, the Senate Peace Commission, the High Commissioner for Peace and the High Counsellor for Post-Conflict agreed to work together on reintegration challenges.

Constitutional Court review of peace-related legislation

10. On 16 August, in an important decision, the Constitutional Court upheld the constitutionality of the statute on the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, while providing clarification thereon. In particular, the Court found that the sentences that the Special Jurisdiction was authorized to impose of five to eight years of special restrictions on freedom were compatible with participation in politics (provided that the sentenced individual fulfilled a series of conditions), while stricter sentences were not. Overall, the decision amounts to a clearer and more solid legal framework for the work of the Special Jurisdiction. This will, in turn, contribute to greater legal certainty in the implementation of the Peace Agreement, for the individuals subject to its jurisdiction and for victims.

11. The Court also declared constitutional Decree Law 902, which outlines measures for the implementation of comprehensive rural reform, and Legislative Act No. 5 of 29 November 2017, which upholds the State's monopoly on the legitimate use of force and prohibits support for civilian armed organized groups.

12. In the Peace Agreement, the signatories agreed to submit legislation adopted by Congress through the fast-track procedure for a prior and automatic review by the Constitutional Court. With its recent decisions, the Court has completed its work in this regard and has undertaken, in total, the judicial review of six constitutional amendments, four statutes and 35 decrees related to the implementation of the Agreement. By doing so, it has undoubtedly contributed substantively to the peace process. The adjustments and clarifications that it has made during its review have sought to reconcile differing views of the Agreement and the outcome has brought key provisions into line with constitutional norms.

Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition

13. The United Nations system, at the request of the Government, continues to provide important technical and operational support to all three components of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition: the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Truth Commission and the Special Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing.

14. Equipped with a solid legal framework, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace opened its first cases. Case 001 is focused on kidnappings by FARC-EP; case 002 on violent events involving multiple parties in Tumaco, Department of Nariño, from 1990 to 2016, when communities of Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities were particularly affected; and case 003 on extrajudicial executions by State agents. The Special Jurisdiction has held hearings with senior representatives of the former FARC-EP and current and retired senior officials of the armed forces and national police, often with the participation of victims. Several civilian third parties, including two former members of Congress, have also brought cases that will be heard under the Special Jurisdiction. A wide variety of State and non-State institutions have also submitted information to the Special Jurisdiction documenting cases and patterns of violence.

15. Earlier in 2018, FARC expressed concern about the situation of the assets that the group had handed over to the Government in August 2017 to be used for the purpose of providing reparation to victims. In August and September, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace requested information from various competent authorities to ensure that the assets were used for the originally intended purposes.

16. As part of its examination of the case of FARC leader Seuxis Pausias Hernández Solarte (alias Jesús Santrich), who is under an extradition order from the United States of America, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is considering evidence provided by the Office of the Attorney General. On 12 September, the Special Jurisdiction requested from the Office all evidence in its possession.

17. Further to the concerns made public by the Mission on the whereabouts of several former FARC-EP commanders, on 12 September the Special Jurisdiction for Peace requested the 31 members of the former FARC-EP General Command to provide a report on their contributions to truth and reintegration, including support for the location of missing persons.

18. Decree 1393, of 2 August, established the internal structure and functions of the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing during the armed conflict. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other organizations working on behalf of families of the disappeared called for adequate support to be provided to this effort of the transitional justice system.

Referendum on corruption

19. The fight against corruption was a key theme throughout the electoral campaign. On 26 August, a referendum on seven proposals to address corruption and promote transparency was held at the initiative of several political parties and with the support of the President. While the results missed the threshold of approval by a slim margin, they nevertheless showed a high level of popular support for tackling corruption. As a result, the President invited all political parties to support a citizens' compact against corruption. A package of reforms, including the seven proposals submitted to the referendum, was negotiated among political parties and submitted to Congress on 18 September. I note that those reforms are consistent with the provisions of the Peace Agreement that, in the chapter on security guarantees, call for the Government to prevent and control corruption, in particular by regulating the integrity, performance and assets of public officials.

Substitution of illicit crops

20. On 19 September, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Government launched a report on illicit crop monitoring for 2017. By the end of 2017, the country's coca cultivation had reached record levels of 171,000 ha, with a potential production of 1,379 tons of pure cocaine. Illicit economies, which include mining and drugs, are a continued source of violence in the country and a threat to the peace process.

21. Meanwhile, as reported by UNODC, 77,659 families have signed voluntary substitution agreements under the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops, committing themselves to eradicating approximately 49,000 ha of coca cultivation. As at 20 August, around 20,845 ha of coca crops had been eradicated under those agreements. The armed forces have assisted in the voluntary eradication of an additional 5,374 ha. Despite serious challenges, including the killing of community members and threats against leaders of the substitution programme, the continued participation of communities demonstrates that they can spearhead such an effort. While the Government is formulating a comprehensive policy on drug cultivation, it has reiterated its commitment to families who have already signed voluntary substitution agreements.

Negotiations between the Government and the National Liberation Army

22. On 1 August, the sixth round of talks between the Government and the National Liberation Army (ELN) concluded in Havana. The negotiating teams reported that,

although they did not reach definitive agreements, progress was made, in particular with regard to designing a process for the participation of society in building peace.

23. With respect to future negotiations, ELN has called for continuity with regard to both the negotiating agenda agreed to in 2016 and the negotiating format, including the participation of guarantor and supporting countries.

24. Discussions on the continuation of the talks with the new Government were affected by the kidnapping, in early August, of seven uniformed personnel and two civilians by ELN in two separate events. The groups were released on 5 and 12 September, respectively. A minor kidnapped on 7 September was released on 19 September.

25. After deliberating for a month, the President announced on 8 September that he was prepared to renew discussions with ELN, provided that the group release all hostages under its control and cease all acts of violence. ELN rejected those preconditions and insisted that those issues be discussed at the negotiating table. In the absence of direct negotiations, the continued direct communication between the Government and ELN is welcome. The Government has made it clear that it expects a cessation of all violence; the ELN, for its part, has stated that it aims to bring about substantive change based on a broad social dialogue. The two goals are not incompatible. As I stated during my visit to Colombia at the beginning of 2018, full social participation requires a situation exempt from violence and conducive to an effective and respectful dialogue. I invite the two sides to explore further this potential for convergence and to bring about a process that promptly delivers benefits to the Colombian society as a whole.

III. Mission tasks

A. Socioeconomic and political reintegration

26. The process of economic reintegration is clearly lagging behind other dimensions of reintegration. As I indicated in my previous report (S/2018/723), the fundamental goal of providing income-generating opportunities to some 14,000 former combatants is far from being realized, as illustrated by the fact that only 17 projects have been approved, of which only 2 are currently funded. Meanwhile, dozens of initiatives led and mainly funded by former FARC-EP members are at various stages of implementation in the territorial areas for training and reintegration and new settlements, with varying levels of success. As shown in several cases, many of the initiatives can be turned into viable income-generating ventures if provided with better access to technical and marketing advice, land and overall support from the Government, local authorities and the private sector, among others.

27. While the payment of monthly allowances and the provision of other early reintegration services, including the provision of food in the territorial areas for training and reintegration, to former FARC-EP members are continuing, over the past few weeks the new Government has been taking stock and developing its own approach. Some of its conclusions are consistent with the lessons identified in my previous report: (a) the importance of ensuring that regional and local authorities are empowered and, along with the private sector and other actors, actively engaged in the reintegration process; (b) the need to bring the reintegration of former FARC-EP members closer to the development of communities; and (c) the value of linking reintegration strategies to the work done under another pillar of the Peace Agreement, the development programmes with a territorial focus. A territorial and community-based approach is particularly appropriate given the increased dispersal of former FARC-EP members outside the territorial areas for training and reintegration. This

approach is consistent with the aspirations of FARC and the framework implementation plan, as well as the policy on reintegration adopted in June. The functioning of the National Reintegration Council must be improved in order to ensure that reintegration is rooted in local realities and opportunities. Now that the new members of the Council have been appointed, it is of utmost importance that economic reintegration activities resume on a larger scale and at a faster pace than before.

28. Taking into account the period of transition between the two administrations, the Mission has redoubled its efforts to support swift income-generating activities drawing on extrabudgetary funding from the Department of Political Affairs trust fund and additional contributions from donors. In total, the initiatives support 47 microenterprises by former FARC-EP members in all 25 territorial areas for training and reintegration and in 22 new settlements, in both urban and rural settings. Nine of the microenterprise projects are led by women, and gender considerations are ensured in all initiatives that are supported.

29. As part of the effort to bolster reintegration, the Mission has agreed with the Resident Coordinator, the High Commissioner for Peace and the FARC leadership to prepare a joint proposal to be submitted to the Peacebuilding Fund. The proposal will address socioeconomic reintegration and reconciliation and be implemented by several United Nations agencies.

Political reintegration

30. As mentioned in my previous report, FARC representatives were sworn into 8 of the 10 congressional seats allocated to the party under the Peace Agreement. The allocation of the seats that were not taken by FARC leaders Iván Márquez (who did not present himself to be sworn in) and Jesús Santrich (who was in detention pursuant to an extradition request) is still under discussion by the relevant institutions. The four FARC senators and four representatives are serving on key congressional committees covering issues relating to constitutional affairs, the budget, peace, agriculture, health and gender. FARC legislators have proposed and supported draft legislation related to aspects of the Peace Agreement.

B. Legal guarantees

31. During the transition to the new Government, the Mission continued to work cooperatively with the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace and FARC. This tripartite approach to legal guarantees has been effective and I hope that its continuation will help to bring agreed solutions to outstanding issues.

32. As at 30 August, approximately 13,000 former FARC-EP members had been accredited by the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace and 12,773 of them had been notified of and provided with their accreditation, an increase of 150 since my previous report. The increased dispersal of former FARC-EP members, which was described in the previous report, continues to complicate the tripartite efforts of FARC, the Office of the High Commissioner and the Mission to locate these individuals and inform them of their accreditation.

33. The Office of the High Commissioner for Peace continued to review, with FARC, the list dated 15 August 2017 of former FARC-EP members: 24 individuals were excluded from the list and 33 were accredited.

34. At the end of August, 232 accredited former FARC-EP members remained in prison. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace has opened some cases related to those individuals, as well as to some 250 others designated as "peace advocates", largely

made possible by the implementation, within the Special Jurisdiction, of the Independent System for Advice and Defence, and by legal support provided by the international community and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This represents a small increase over the figures in my previous report as a result of recent new accreditations of former FARC-EP members in prison.

35. It is very important that the Independent System for Advice and Defence be adequately resourced and staffed in order to fulfil its responsibilities in terms of the provision of legal guarantees and reintegration. The previous Government approved the decree for its establishment, but it was the new Government that approved the funds for its functioning. The funds must be made available as soon as possible, thereby permitting the System to be staffed with some 30 lawyers in the next few months, at a time when demand for the System has increased sharply.

36. In addition, as previously reported, FARC has consolidated a list of some 1,000 additional former FARC-EP members. The Office of the High Commissioner for Peace received the list on 10 August. The list includes people who are recognized by FARC as former FARC-EP members, but who do not appear in the list of 15 August 2017. Most of them come from areas affected by continuing security challenges and where the integration of the individuals into the process could be beneficial. As such, I hope that this matter will be treated by the new Government as a priority.

C. Security guarantees

Security of former members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army

37. The military and police forces continue to secure the area around all territorial areas for training and reintegration. New settlements of former FARC-EP members outside those areas continue to expand and some of them are located in areas exposed to the influence of illegal armed groups. Their security requirements highlight the importance of a wider effort to extend security to the broader zones of conflict.

38. Close protection by the Specialized Subdirectorate for Security and Protection of the National Protection Unit remains a key element of the security measures implemented for former FARC-EP members. During the period under review, an additional 56 bodyguards, including 2 women, were hired. The recruitment of a further 46 bodyguards would meet the target of 1,200 as set out in the Peace Agreement.

39. At the national, regional and local levels, the Tripartite Protection and Security Mechanism, with the participation of the Police Unit for Peacebuilding, the National Protection Unit and the Mission, continued to operate during the transition period and remains the main mechanism for dialogue and monitoring of the protection of and security measures for former FARC-EP members. The performance of the Police Unit and National Protection Unit within this mechanism is commendable. The Mechanism is strengthening its capacity to respond to specific risks faced by former FARC-EP female members and has effectively integrated gender focal points for FARC, the Police Unit and the Mission into its structure. Local FARC focal points, supported by the Mission, are playing a significant role in enhancing understanding of and ensuring adequate institutional responses to local security challenges.

40. Outside the scope of those security measures, nine former FARC-EP members in the process of reintegration were killed during the reporting period, bringing the total number killed since the signing of the Peace Agreement to 71. Deteriorating security conditions for former FARC-EP members living outside the territorial areas for training and reintegration were starkly exposed by the tragic events in El Tarra,

Norte de Santander Department, where 10 people, including four former FARC-EP members, were killed on 30 July.

41. The Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney General continues to be responsible for investigations into the killings of former FARC-EP members. It has pointed out that three quarters of those killings are concentrated in five departments: Nariño (16 victims), Antioquia (14 victims), Cauca (12 victims), Caquetá (8 victims) and Norte de Santander (7 victims). In 34 cases, the Unit reported significant progress in its investigations, with 17 instigators or perpetrators arrested. Of these, 15 cases involved dissident groups, 7 involved private individuals, 6 were attributed to ELN, 4 cases were attributed to the Clan del Golfo criminal group, 1 involved local criminal organization and 1 case remains under investigation. According to the Investigation Unit, the principal motives behind the attacks are related to territorial control (21 cases) and revenge (3 cases). Other motives identified are revenge for prior grievances, internal differences within territorial areas for training and reintegration, refusal to join a criminal organization and extortion. It is key to ensure that the Unit broadens its territorial presence, particularly as it is expanding its investigations into the killings of social leaders.

42. The statistics from the Special Investigation Unit confirm the need to pay special attention to the security situation in and around certain territorial areas for training and reintegration in the Departments of Nariño, Antioquia and Cauca. Other incidents have occurred in the territorial areas in the Departments of Arauca and Putumayo, where attacks have taken place, including within the perimeter of the territorial areas. Armed groups and dissidents have been observed in the surrounding areas.

Security guarantees for communities, human rights defenders and social leaders

43. As mentioned herein, on 23 August, at a meeting in Apartadó, Antioquia Department, the President and the Inspector General announced the adoption of the pact for life and the protection of social leaders and human rights defenders and instructed the Ministry of the Interior to follow up urgently with policy guidelines.

44. The sense of urgency is driven by recent developments. All sources, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Colombia, attest that killings of and threats against social leaders and human rights defenders continue unabated. According to an early warning from the Office of the Ombudsman in February 2018, the killings and threats affect 12 of the 32 departments in the country. This same alert identifies the multiple issues behind the killings, including the victims' involvement in defending land and natural resources; in implementing parts of the Peace Agreement, in particular the coca substitution programme and the formulation of rural development plans; in land restitution and the return of displaced persons; in defending their land against private interests; in denouncing drug dealing, the presence of illegal armed actors and the use of children and adolescents in marginalized urban areas; in protesting against specific investments of public resources; and in political participation. Reversing this trend is critical to protecting human rights and preserving spaces for social actors to uphold their rights.

45. The investigation carried out by the Inspector General, which coincides with the analysis by the Office of the Ombudsman, identifies three factors: control of territories for the drug trade; large infrastructure projects; and pressure on ethnic communities. These factors are present in several of the 12 departments most affected.

46. Most of the victims are members of local action boards, the most basic form of association officially recognized by the Constitution; leaders of indigenous communities and communities of Colombians of African descent; and leaders of coca substitution programmes.

47. As shown above, the persistent pattern of killings is relatively well defined in terms of its geographical scope, the people targeted and the typology of motivations. As I underscored in previous reports, there is a need for a proactive and integrated State presence in former conflict areas. A focused, coordinated and sustained effort by State institutions, as called for in the pact adopted in Apartadó and signed by the President, the Deputy Attorney General, the Inspector General, the Ombudsman and several governors, should be able to address this challenge forcefully.

48. In its current work to develop guidelines for the implementation of the pact, the Ministry of the Interior is finalizing its analysis of existing mechanisms for the protection of social leaders. These include the security guarantee round tables created in 2007, the National Protection Unit and the mechanisms recently established under the Peace Agreement such as the Intersectoral Commission for Rapid Response to Early Warnings to ensure an effective response to the Ombudsman's alerts, and the comprehensive programme for the protection and security of communities and organizations.

49. In the Mission's assessment, the early warnings issued by the Office of the Ombudsman have confirmed their value as a tool for prevention, risk analysis and raising awareness among institutions and the public at large. With regard to the Intersectoral Commission, it will be important to promote and improve inter-agency responses at the local level. The National Commission on Security Guarantees has a key role to play in bringing together all competent institutions at the highest level under the leadership of the President. It offers a platform for dialogue with civil society organizations and is a feature unique to the Colombian peace process.

50. The importance of a State-wide action plan to respond effectively to patterns of violence in zones of conflict cannot be overstated. Success in this area will have to be a key priority of the new Government and one of its main contributions to the consolidation of the peace process.

Early warnings by the Office of the Ombudsman

51. During the reporting period, the Mission monitored 13 early warnings issued by the Office of the Ombudsman in 16 municipalities, with repeated warnings in the Departments of Nariño, Chocó and Tolima. These warnings highlighted the presence of illegal armed groups and the resulting risk to social leaders and communities participating in the National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops and development programmes with a territorial focus, both linked to the Peace Agreement. All 13 warnings pointed to specific risks to women, ethnic groups and children and were linked to gender and ethnic violence and to the recruitment of children under 18 years old into illegal armed groups. The warnings note that armed violence is affecting communities at large, including former FARC-EP members in the process of reintegration, leading communities and social organizations to demand effective government measures for stabilization and territorial security.

D. Cross-cutting issues

Gender mainstreaming and engagement with women's groups

52. The Vice-President, Marta Lucía Ramírez, who is responsible for leading the Government's gender agenda, stated her intention to maintain a regular dialogue with women's groups during an initial meeting in July and convened a Cabinet meeting to take this agenda forward on 28 August, emphasizing the economic empowerment of women and efforts to eliminate sexual violence. The Special High-level Forum of Women, established under the Peace Agreement, is working to strengthen its monitoring mechanism for the gender provisions of the Final Peace Agreement.

53. During the reporting period, as mentioned above, the gender technical working group of the National Reintegration Council strove to promote the gender-sensitive reintegration of female former FARC-EP members, among others with guidance for the implementation of the gender actions of the policy on reintegration adopted in June 2018 and technical support for the implementation of productive projects. There was progress in identifying and prioritizing women-led productive projects.

54. The security guarantees for women leaders and human rights defenders remain an issue of concern. The effective implementation of the recently launched Comprehensive Security Programme for Women Human Rights Defenders, and the corresponding action plan, offers an opportunity to address the differentiated risks and the responses that women require. In this respect, the national police are continuing their efforts in seven regions to improve their ability to respond to gender-based violence through improved training and coordination with local authorities, as well as gender awareness activities with respect to military personnel deployed in the territorial areas for training and reintegration.

55. In an effort to promote the meaningful political participation of women, a non-governmental organization, La Kolectiva, is working with FARC, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and donor countries to open a school for the exercise of citizenship and political advocacy for the reintegration of women former combatants. This initiative is under implementation in seven territorial areas for training and reintegration in the Departments of Antioquia and Cauca and provides education on the rights and obligations of citizenship and strategies for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality.

56. The Mission has been supporting dialogues among diverse actors at the local and regional levels to foster confidence-building and create spaces to exchange best practices on local peacebuilding. For example, in Nariño Department, the Mission, in coordination with UN-Women, supported a process of dialogue and reconciliation between women victims of the conflict and female former FARC-EP members, bringing together more than 32 former women combatants and representatives of regional victims' organizations. This initiative will be replicated in other locations, creating a network of women working for reconciliation.

57. Based on its experience throughout the country, the Mission has developed a guidance handbook on gender-sensitive verification for its staff. It has adopted a Mission-wide gender directive and continues to strengthen its dialogue with women's organizations at the national and local levels, including FARC women's groups in territorial areas for training and reintegration and respective local government bodies.

58. The Peace Agreement continues to be cited, rightly, as ground-breaking in terms of how gender is mainstreamed into its provisions. Nevertheless, its implementation remains a challenge, including with regard to security guarantees and reintegration. This challenge can be met only with greater prioritization and resources.

Ethnic perspectives

59. On 9 August, the second day of his term, the President met representatives of indigenous communities and committed himself to including a chapter on indigenous peoples in his national development plan. The need to address the situation of ethnic communities was highlighted by the killings of and high number of threats against ethnic leaders and the confinement and displacement of indigenous communities and communities of Colombians of African descent registered during the reporting period.

60. On 28 August, the Mission leadership met the High-level Forum of Ethnic Peoples established to monitor the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement and

engage with the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement. The High-level Forum and the Mission have identified a joint work agenda that includes follow-up on ethnic indicators of the Framework Plan for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement with regard to reintegration and security guarantees. Reintegration-related monitoring will comprise the inclusion of an ethnic approach in productive projects; the promotion of conflict prevention on territorial issues; and reconciliation and dialogue between traditional authorities and the leadership of territorial areas for training and reintegration. With regard to security guarantees, joint efforts will focus on integration of ethnic considerations in the protection of communities, organizations and leaders in the zone of conflict. Provision of operational support to the High-level Forum will assist in fulfilling its functions and advancing the implementation of the ethnic chapter of the Peace Agreement.

Child protection

61. The Government's reintegration programme for children, entitled "A Different Path of Life", continued to be implemented under the coordination of the newly appointed presidential Counsellor for Human Rights. The Agency for Reintegration and Normalization and the technical working group on children of the National Reintegration Council have become more involved in supporting children in the programme who are now adults. Notwithstanding these advances, the number of cases in which children have not received adequate support for daily subsistence remains of concern. A decree is pending to clarify the Government's response to adolescents and young people who have decided to continue their reintegration within the territorial areas for training and reintegration, and the definition of a legal entity to guarantee the sustainability of and budget for the Government's reintegration programme for children.

62. There was no progress regarding day-care facilities for children of former FARC-EP members living in the territorial areas for training and reintegration. The lack of social inclusion programmes, such as preventive health, education, recreational and cultural activities, is also a challenge requiring a clear policy from the Government. There are also a growing number of cases related to former FARC-EP members, especially women, seeking to regularize the legal guardianship of their children. A special protocol for those cases may be required in the light of the implications for their reintegration.

63. The recent adoption by the Government of guidelines on the prevention of recruitment and sexual violence against children is a welcome development. It will be important to implement them in zones of conflict. To ensure their effectiveness, the guidelines should dovetail with existing frameworks and structures for community security guarantees as provided for in the Peace Agreement, including the early warning system.

Youth and peace and security

64. The Mission has adopted a strategy for the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on youth and peace and security, with a focus on the role of young people in reintegration and security guarantees. On reintegration, the Mission is continuing to facilitate visits to the territorial areas for training and reintegration by young entrepreneurs, civil society leaders and university students, focused on providing first-hand information about the reintegration process and identifying opportunities for supporting productive projects. For example, young entrepreneurs from the tourism sector who have participated in the visits are helping to promote the projects of former FARC-EP members through their travel agencies and social media. On security guarantees, the Mission is strengthening its dialogue

with youth leaders and organizations and young former FARC-EP members to better understand their specific security needs and concerns. The Mission is also working with the National Council for Peace and Reconciliation, established under section 3.4 of the Final Agreement, to promote increased engagement by young people with the territorial peace councils. In order to integrate a youth focus throughout its verification and liaison activities, the Mission has established a network of youth focal points throughout its regional and subregional offices.

Liaison and coordination

65. During the transition period, the Mission established relations with the new Administration, sharing its assessment of the peace process and emphasizing the need to devote full attention to the still fragile reintegration process. Initial dialogue with the High Commissioner for Peace, the High Counsellor for Post Conflict and the Minister of the Interior has been positive and productive.

66. The Mission has also continued its engagement with independent oversight institutions. It has strengthened its relationship with the Inspector General, who is increasingly active in support of the peace process, especially with regard to security guarantees for community and social leaders.

67. In an effort to create favourable conditions for reconciliation at the territorial level, the Mission has been supporting dialogue among diverse actors at the local and departmental levels to foster confidence-building and create spaces to exchange best practices on local peacebuilding. For example, the Mission has supported dialogue with local social leaders to help to understand the risks and regional dynamics related to protection and facilitate information-sharing with national authorities and competent institutions. Additional initiatives are under way with diverse actors, including former FARC-EP members, youth leaders, community action associations, universities, the armed forces and victims of the conflict.

68. The Mission has continued to promote the involvement of the private sector in the reintegration process. In the territorial area Llano Grande in Antioquia Department, the Mission facilitated an alliance between 14 private sector foundations to support social, educational and cultural programmes in the territorial area and the surrounding community. The Mission also sees great potential in the private sector supporting former FARC-EP members' productive projects through the provision of technical assistance, the development of business plans and the commercialization of products produced in the territorial areas for training and reintegration.

IV. Coordination with the United Nations country team

69. The Mission continues to work closely with agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system on matters that relate to their specialized mandates, including through the liaison efforts of the Mission's gender, child protection and advisers on ethnic issues and joint thematic working groups on reintegration and security guarantees.

70. The United Nations country team, the Mission and relevant institutions continued to coordinate programming in support of the reintegration process. The United Nations multi-partner trust fund has allocated $9 million to socioeconomic reintegration interventions, in addition to support from bilateral donors. UNDP has been a strategic partner of the Mission in mobilizing, designing and implementing funds for micro-level income-generating reintegration projects for former FARC-EP members in the territorial areas for training and reintegration and new settlements. The World Food Programme, the International Organization for Migration, the Food

and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and UN-Women are providing technical assistance across nine territorial areas for training and reintegration, where collective projects have been approved, including ensuring a gender equality approach.

71. With regard to security guarantees, the Mission and United Nations agencies met representatives of the Government to explore specific actions to take forward the pact for life and the protection of social leaders and human rights defenders agreed upon in Apartadó. The Mission and the country team have also collaborated in efforts to strengthen the early warning system. In early September, OHCHR and the Mission co-organized a meeting with representatives of human rights platforms to strengthen joint coordination and cooperation on a shared peace and human rights agenda; this dialogue will be replicated at the regional level. In addition, the United Nations multi-partner trust fund and the Peacebuilding Fund have financed activities in more than 135 municipalities since late 2017, including support to local justice mechanisms, humanitarian demining and mine action, community infrastructure and community-based measures to reduce violence against women and children.

V. Mission structures

Mission planning, operations and support

72. During the reporting period, the Mission undertook a detailed analysis of evolving factors in the operating environment with potential implications for its mandate, deployment and geographical coverage. One factor considered was the increased dispersal of former FARC-EP members in new settlements across the country, as well as in some larger cities. Based on this analysis, the Mission slightly adjusted its deployment and the areas of responsibility assigned to its offices to ensure an effective, cost-efficient and flexible implementation of its mandate in the field. The changes complement the Mission's hub-and-spoke approach, which relies on greater mobility of staff operating from hub offices in urban centres, rather than on a larger number of stand-alone camps. The Mission has begun relocating local sites to hub locations, has closed high-cost remote camps and has identified office premises in new areas of operation. Once completed, the field redeployment process will result in the consolidation of Mission locations from 43 to 37 field sites, and an overall reduction in operational support requirements in deep-field locations. The Mission continues to work closely with counterparts to ensure full adherence to national and United Nations environmental standards.

73. Significant efforts were undertaken during the reporting period to advance the Mission's strategy on gender parity. Following a recent recruitment drive, 58 per cent of Professional-level field staff positions are filled by women and 65 per cent of field office teams are led by women. In addition, 28 of 111 international unarmed observers are women.

Safety and security

74. The residual risk levels after the implementation of the security risk management measures remain medium and low. However, there were several noteworthy security incidents and developments during the reporting period. In the first incident, FARC-EP dissidents forcibly entered a meeting of the FARC party in Norte de Santander Department; two Mission personnel were present and no participants were injured. As a result of new mines placed by illegal armed groups linked to drug trafficking, the number of civilian victims of anti-personnel mines in the first eight months of 2018 was 46, more than double the 18 registered during the same period in 2017. Activities of illegal armed groups in the Departments of Arauca,

Norte de Santander, Chocó, Cauca, Nariño and Antioquia pose indirect threats to United Nations personnel and operations. Lastly, the security recommendations in effect since the Hidroituango dam crisis remain in place as the situation remained largely unchanged.

Conduct and discipline

75. The Mission continues to hold regular training sessions for new and existing personnel. A campaign to raise awareness regarding the sexual exploitation and abuse policy, prohibited conduct and respect in the work environment is under way.

76. During the reporting period, five allegations of misconduct were reported to the Mission and are under investigation. There are no pending cases related to sexual exploitation and abuse.

VI. Observations

77. The present report is issued at the end of the first year of the Mission's mandate and the beginning of the new Administration. For the new Government, as well as for the United Nations, it is an opportunity to take stock of the progress made thus far in the peace process and draw some lessons for the future.

78. In my previous report (S/2018/723), which coincided with the culmination of the electoral process, I highlighted that the congressional and presidential elections of 2018 were recognized as the least violent and the most participatory in decades, making them one of the most tangible benefits of the peace process for society at large. While the peace process is not exempt from serious challenges, and it has been marked by political controversy since its inception, the relevance of the Peace Agreement for the country's future has grown.

79. The commitment of the new Government to applying itself to the implementation of the Peace Agreement, and the broad support that the Agreement enjoys from the opposition and independent parties, are testament to the increased support for the peace process today. In addition to the Government and political parties, several of the most important institutions of the State, including Congress, the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, the Office of the Inspector General and the Office of the Ombudsman, have supported and contributed to the implementation of key parts of the Agreement. If the viability of a peace process is judged by the way it fares through a change from the Government that negotiated and signed it to a new one, the steps taken by the President, as outlined herein, are promising. I am hopeful that Colombian institutions will continue to pursue what is at the core of the peace agenda: security, development and the rule of law in the areas affected by conflict; an effective system of truth, justice and reparation to the victims; and the essential commitments to those who laid down arms. I call upon the authorities to make available the resources necessary for those critical investments in the future of Colombia, with all possible support from the international community.

80. As evidenced by the more worrying developments referred to herein, including the expansion of illegal economies, the competition of criminal groups for territorial control and the persistence of violence, the challenges remain formidable. Nothing less than a determined mobilization by State institutions in alliance with civil society and communities will be up to the challenge of bringing stability and development to vast and remote areas that are prey to those interconnected threats. I am encouraged by the spirit of national consensus that has emerged in recent weeks around the protection of social leaders and efforts to combat corruption. I hope that the same search for consensus will extend to the other dimensions of this agenda. As the

President and his Government are formulating key policies, I hope in particular that the broad social dialogue in which he is engaged will enable him to forge a national consensus around a policy on illegal drugs, on which unfortunately so many farmers in the zones of conflict depend.

81. The resolution of the issues in the mandate of the Mission, including the reintegration of former FARC-EP members and the security guarantees for communities in areas most affected by conflict, is intimately linked to the challenges described above. The experience of the past year has shown how difficult these tasks are, and the number of leaders killed, as well as the frustration of many former guerrillas, stand as evidence of this. However, these tasks are not intractable. Some of the lessons learned have been outlined in past reports, as well as in the present one. They involve designing solutions much closer to the problems at hand, empowering and trusting local actors and having institutions respond faster and more coherently. I trust in particular that the signatories to the pact for life and the protection of social leaders and human rights defenders concluded in Apartadó on 23 August will deliver fully on their commitments.

82. The Mission aspires to contribute to those aims through its mandate and the presence of its staff throughout the zones of conflict, together with the United Nations system and the international community as a whole. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the extraordinary dedication that each and every member of the Mission has demonstrated under the committed and experienced leadership of my Special Representative. I take the recent request of the Government and the FARC party to renew the Mission's mandate as evidence of their commitment to seeing this process through to its successful conclusion, and of their trust that the Mission can contribute to this end. I am grateful once again to the Security Council for expressing its confidence in the peace process and the service that the Mission can render to it.